

# **EAST PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT**

**East Providence City Hall**

**145 Taunton Avenue**

**East Providence, Rhode Island 02914**

## **Special School Committee Meeting**

**July 26, 2007**

### **Open Session**

**Mrs. Morris called the meeting to order at 4:00PM. All members were present: Robert Faria, Eileen Lovett, David Medeiros, Steven Santos and Mildred Morris. Also present: Dr. Jacqueline B. Forbes, Superintendent of Schools, Robert Silva, Esq. and Andrew Thomas, Esq. A motion was made by Mr. Medeiros to move to Executive Session in accordance with RI General Laws, Section 42-46-5 (a) (1) Personnel, (a) (2) Collective Bargaining/Litigation, seconded by Mr. Faria. Vote 5-0.**

**Public Session reconvened at 7:30PM. A motion was made by Mr. Medeiros to return to open session and to seal the minutes of the executive session, seconded by Mrs. Lovett. Vote 5-0.**

**Mrs. Morris requested public votes on three issues voted on in executive session:**

**„X To approve a merit pay increase in the Superintendent's contract totaling 2.5%. Motion to approve by Mr. Faria, seconded by Mr. Medeiros. Roll call vote: Mr. Faria, aye; Mrs. Lovett, aye; Mr. Medeiros, aye; Mr. Santos, aye; Mrs. Morris, abstained. Vote: 4 aye, 1 abstention.**

**„X To approve sending a letter to the Auditor General. Motion by Mrs. Lovett to send a letter to the Auditor General to explain the financial situation for 2007-2008 fiscal year, seconded by Mr. Medeiros. Dr. Forbes will send the letter to notify the Auditor General and the City regarding an impending deficit due to contractual obligations and special education costs in the hope that the Auditor General will work with the School Committee to come to an agreement. Vote: 5-0.**

**To approve hiring a Health Insurance Consultant (School Department is self-insured and needs to have a consultant). Motion by Mr. Faria to hire a health insurance on a month- to-month basis, as deemed necessary by the Superintendent, seconded by Mr. Medeiros. Vote 5-0.**

**The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was led by Mr. Santos and a Moment of Silence was observed.**

**Elementary School Principal Interviews ;V Nancy Cullion and Fatima Avila were interviewed.**

**The School Committee recessed. A motion was made by Mr. Santos to return to Executive Session, seconded by Mr. Faria. Vote 5-0.**

**The School Committee reconvened at 8:50 PM. A motion was made by Mr. Faria to return to open session and seal the minutes of the executive session, seconded by Mrs. Lovett. Vote 5-0.**

### **Report of Superintendent and Staff**

**Dr. Forbes commented that she was very pleased with the candidates who applied for the position of elementary principal. Dr. Forbes recommended the appointment of Fatima Avila to the position of Principal of Kent Heights School. A motion was made by Mr. Faria to accept the recommendation of the Superintendent, seconded by Mr. Medeiros. Roll call vote: Mr. Faria, aye; Mrs. Lovett, aye; Mr. Medeiros, aye; Mr. Santos, aye; Mrs. Morris, aye.**

**Dr. Forbes stated that she would continue to apprise the committee and public at large of any remedial actions she may recommend, as the East Providence School Department continues to deal with the financial strains facing the budget and that these are difficult times which will change the way our educational services are delivered to students. The school department is currently exploring the use of an automated system which may be able to record, process and assign**

substitute teachers and other staff when necessary. The process of the general public reaching a person by telephone will be eliminated by switching to an automated voice mail system; the use of technology will more efficient at less cost. Dr. Forbes also reported that everyone must be aware of the constraints of the current financial situation and the district is looking at contract reform, in addition to developing alternative educational strategies.

Dr. Forbes reviewed educational reforms which have taken place through action of the School Committee:

„X Education program - Non-mandated programs eliminated (ESL Preschool, extended day ESL K replaced with full day; will increase full day Kindergarten at Whiteknact and Hennessey.

„X RIDE additional instruction ;V two elementary art teachers to increase instructional time requirement by RIDE.

Also, major changes or reforms in 2007-08:

„X Reduction in non-certified staff, reducing secretarial support staff necessary to meet legal obligation for balanced budget

„X Teacher Assistant reductions through elimination of positions, retirement, etc.

**„X Maintenance and custodial ;V elimination of three maintenance positions and lay-off of three custodians; through the course of next year, not replacing through attrition; a total of seven positions**

**„X Eliminated Assistant Principal position at Martin Middle School and the Assistant Athletic Director at the High School**

**Dr. Forbes reported that these items were voted on at the last School Committee Meeting and she was asked to bring this information to the public's attention; she has worked with the unions and employees on the reorganization plan.**

**Mr. Faria wished to have discussion about the Martin Middle School position; with student enrollment at 900 and the dynamics of the school and the age of the kids, he felt the need to reconsider and discuss the position. Mrs. Morris agreed with Mr. Faria, as she also had concerns with safety and thought we should advertise for the position. Dr. Forbes said it was recommended by the program audit that one principal and two assistants were thought to be sufficient.**

**Mr. Faria made a motion to rescind the prior vote to eliminate this position. Dr. Forbes said given the financial crisis, she recommended following the recommendation of the auditor consultants. Mr. Santos asked by not filling the position, will it effect students of the school and is the staff capable of running the school? Dr. Forbes responded**

**that according to law, regulation and contract, it can be done.**

**Mrs. Morris asked about other schools with Martin's set-up of a four-house concept. Dr. Forbes agreed that the structure is unique at Martin. Mr. Faria's motion was seconded by Mrs. Lovett.**

**Mr. Santos said it might be an option to start the year and see what happens; look at similar situations and determine if the school can be run properly without this position.**

**A Roll call vote was taken on the motion to rescind the prior vote to eliminate the position of Assistant Principal at Martin Middle School: Mr. Faria, aye; Mrs. Lovett, aye; Mr. Medeiros, aye; Mr. Santos, nay; Mrs. Morris, aye. Motion carried 4-1.**

**Mr. Faria asked to also review a clerical position at Martin Middle School; one house is not used to capacity and he asked the Superintendent to research to see if the position can be eliminated.**

**Mr. Medeiros took the Chair's seat. Mrs. Morris said that at a previous meeting, the School Committee eliminated the Assistant Athletic Director's position and there is no secretary in that office with a high enrollment. Mr. Amaral cannot handle the situation by himself. Mrs. Morris made a motion to rescind the vote on the elimination of the Assistant Athletic Director position (stipend position at \$5000 year round), seconded by Mrs. Lovett. Mr. Santos had a problem with rescinding the vote on that position.**

**Mrs. Morris said that Mr. Amaral met with the Superintendent and requested this action because of the work load. Dr. Forbes said the consultant felt we did not need an assistant, however, when looking at the body of work to be done by the Athletic Director. She was not convinced he can do the work alone and we could reinstate and/or delegate the duties. The Superintendent was not sure we could provide the same level of service**

**Mrs. Morris withdrew her motion; Dr. Forbes will research this and come back at the next meeting with a recommendation after discussing this with Mr. Amaral to see if a different recommendation can be made.**

**Personnel Recommendations ¶ Mrs. Rodericks presented the following personnel items:**

**APPOINTMENTS**

<b>Yolanda O'Neill</b>	<b>Spanish, Secondary</b>
<b>Summer School</b>	
<b>Neal Bogosian</b>	<b>Special Education, Self</b>
<b>Contained - HS</b>	
<b>Karen Weber</b>	<b>Speech/Language Pathologist</b>
<b>Pamela Jensen</b>	<b>School Psychologist</b>
<b>Motion: Lovett/Second: Faria. Vote 5-0</b>	

## **RETIREMENT**

**Joyce Farnsworth (23 yrs)      Teacher Assistant, EPHS**

**Motion: Lovett/Second: Santos. Vote 5-0.**

## **MILITARY LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Joseph Lydon      Social Studies, EPHS**

**2007-08 School Year**

**Motion: Lovett/Second: Medeiros. Vote 5-0.**

## **RECALLS**

**Michael Silva      Social Studies, EPHS**

**1 year only**

**Marcia Goggin      Grade 1, M.J. Francis**

**Motion: Lovett/Second: Medeiros. Vote 5-0.**

## **APPOINTMENT**

**Stacey Croteau      Special Ed, Self Contained, MMS**

**Motion: Lovett/Second: Medeiros. Vote 5-0.**

## **RESIGNATION**

**Samantha Benetti      Math Teacher, HS**



## **Student Liaison, HS**

**Motion: Lovett/Second: Santos. Vote 5-0.**

**School Start Times ¡V Dr. Forbes reported that according to new requirements by Rhode Island Department of Education, instructional time will be increased by ten minutes per day. Mr. Daft explained that in order to meet the state mandate of 330 minutes of instruction, Dr. Forbes met with the union and a Memorandum of Agreement was signed. Effective at the start of the 2007-2008 school year, all elementary schools will start at 8:25AM; middle schools at 7:55AM and the High School at 7:25AM.**

**Facilities Update ¡V Mr. Peter Barilla explained that over the summer custodians have worked in teams to clean the school buildings, the plan is working well, and there is no overtime expected. Dr. Forbes agreed that the new procedure has been received positively and she is very pleased with the quality of the work being done. She thanked Mr. Barilla and Mr. Tavares for their continued support. Mr. Barilla also reported that the heating system and pool projects are proceeding according to schedule. In addition, the wall in front of Riverside Middle School is being worked on and the wall at Silver Spring School is being torn down.**

**Mr. Barilla was commended by Dr. Forbes and the School Committee for all of his efforts as Director of Buildings and Grounds, as Mr. Barilla returns to his former position in the School Department.**

**Finance/Budget Sub-Committee Update ;V Mr. Faria thanked Senator Moura for a legislative grant in the amount of \$25,000. Both he and Mr. Medeiros have been working diligently on the budget and a draft will be presented in August; the numbers do not look good right now, as explained earlier by the Superintendent. Dr. Forbes stance is that we need to notify everyone regarding concerns and work together to problem solve. The School Committee has done everything possible to reduce expenditures; however, we do not have control over some situations, but will continue to work on these areas. She thanked Mr. Faria and Mr. Medeiros. Also to Dr. Hilton and Mr. Capron for their assistance. The budget process will be transparent and shared with the public.**

**Additional School Committee meetings will be held on August 14, and August 21, 2007. Dr. Forbes thanked all parents who turned out at budget meetings. Mr. Faria explained that Dr. Forbes and City Manager, Mr. Brown, will be working together with Roger Williams University; however, it will not impact this budget but is a step in the right direction and he is looking forward to the results of the study. A motion was made by Mr. Faria to endorse the agreement with Roger Williams University and designate the Superintendent as the School Department's representative, seconded by Mr. Santos. Vote 5-0.**

**Question & Answer Period ;V Mrs. Cruz asked why the School Committee has not talked about budget problems before, because**

she didn't know anything about it. Mr. Faria explained that the problems have been ongoing and have been talked about many times even at the state level and that other communities are going through the same things. Dr. Forbes explained the cumulative deficit, unfunded mandates, problems in state funding and expenditures exceeding revenues.

Estelle Machon, President of the Secretarial Union spoke about the position at Martin Middle School; there are students in House C all day and to eliminate a secretary without an Assistant Principal would be a problem. Students and teachers will be there without any support staff available in the event an administrator is not present and there is an emergency. She felt the layoffs are a detriment to the School Department; every building is affected with secretaries bumping into other positions by seniority and not being familiar with the position; she was concerned about eliminating secretarial positions.

A motion was made by Mr. Medeiros to adjourn at 9:45PM, seconded by Mrs. Lovett. Vote 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia A. Iannelli, Administrative Assistant

**Eileen Lovett, Clerk of the Committee**